Perspektive auf das von ihm ethnographisch beschriebene Geschehen. Seine Perspektive ist ganz offensichtlich die der Trommler, mit denen er lebte und von denen er als einer der Ihren anerkannt wurde. Die Bewertung und Kontextualisierung der Jenbe-Musik erfolgt aber durchaus auch durch die wichtigsten Rezipienten, die Frauen, die als Gäste, Sängerinnen und Tänzerinnen an den Festen teilnehmen. Aus dem umfassenden Korpus von insgesamt 434 Festen, die Polak statistisch erfasst und ausgewertet hat, ragt eine Vielzahl von Festen hervor, die Polak auch als Beispiel für das Gelingen oder Misslingen der Interaktion zwischen Trommlern und anderen Festteilnehmern heranzieht. Polak selbst ist auf über 70 Festen als Musiker aufgetreten, und seine Berichte bezeugen eine genaue Kenntnis der diffizilen Interaktion zwischen den Beteiligten im Verlauf eines Festes. Im Verlauf dieser Feste geht es immer wieder darum, die Stimmung der Tänzerinnen zu heben, aber sie auch nicht zu überhitzen, um allen eine Gelegenheit zum Auftritt zu geben. Trotz der genauen Schilderungen bleibt Polaks Bericht der Perspektive der Trommler soweit verhaftet, dass er die Sicht der Frauen nur in Bruchstücken erkennbar macht. Gerade hier hätte sich die Chance auf eine Darstellung über die Geschlechter hinweg ergeben. Offensichtlich gehört es zu den Kennzeichen der Jenbe-Festmusik, dass sie von Männern aufgeführt aber von Frauen rezipiert wird. Was bedeutet dies für das Verhältnis der Geschlechter im Kontext der Aufführung?

Noch eine zweite inhaltliche Ergänzung erscheint wünschenswert. So ist zu erfahren, dass manche Festmusiker auch Engagements am malischen Nationalballett haben und einige von ihnen bei örtlichen Ballettgruppen mitarbeiten. Wechselwirkungen zur Festmusik ergeben sich hier zwangsweise, wie Polak erkennen lässt. Jenbe-Musiker interessieren sich auch für Radiosendungen über und mit Jenbe-Musik und kennen international produzierte CDs. Polak erwähnt sogar, dass einzelne Musiker europäische Privatschüler unterrichten und sehr konkrete Vorstellungen von europäischen Tourneen haben, von denen sie sich einen großen ökonomischen Gewinn versprechen. Jedoch wäre hier auch zu fragen: Welche Auswirkungen haben das Wissen und die Hoffnungen auf internationale Anerkennung für die Musiker? Jenbe-Musik ist längst Teil der Weltmusik. Wie wird diese Rolle von den Musikern in Bamako reflektiert?

Diese Fragen zeigen spontane Interessen des Rezensenten an und sollen nicht den Wert des Buches schmälern. Jede gelungene ethnographische Studie führt zu weiteren Fragen, und kein Werk darf für die Aspekte kritisiert werden, die es – oft aus guten Gründen – nicht behandelt hat. Vielmehr hat im Mittelpunkt der Bewertung die Leistung der Untersuchung zu stehen.

Für die Arbeit von Rainer Polak ist grundsätzlich hervorzuheben, dass sie über den Kreis von Fachleuten der Ethnologie und Musikethnologie hinaus allen an der Jenbe-Musik Interessierten zu empfehlen ist. Sie ist diesem größeren Leserkreis insbesondere als Medizin gegen eine romantisch-vereinfachende Sicht auf die Grundlagen dieser Musik zu empfehlen, da sie unschätzbare Einsichten in den harten Alltag der Jenbe-Trommler in Bamako vermittelt. Hans Peter Hahn

**Porath, Nathan:** When the Bird Flies. Shamanic Therapy and the Maintenance of Worldly Boundaries among an Indigenous People of Riau (Sumatra). Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2003. 258 pp. ISBN 90-5789-088-7. Price: € 29.00

The topics of this book are shamanic healing sessions and community rituals involving shamanic performances among the Sakai. The Sakai are a group of Malay-speaking former hunters and gatherers who have been forced into sedentariness in recent decades. They live in the interfluvial landscape between the downstream sections of the Siak and the Rokan rivers in the province of Riau in eastern Sumatra. Since the 1950s, the Caltex oil company has built roads connecting the area to the provincial capital of Riau and to Dumai on the Straits of Malacca. These roads have attracted settlers and investors who transformed forests into plantations and thus undermined the economic basis of the traditional Sakai way of life. In precolonial times, this way of life included the collection and sale of forest products to traders and the Sultan's tribute collectors. Living close to an important crossroads of traffic and commerce, the Straits of Malacca, the Sakai have been in touch with the political and economic ups and downs of the regional trading entrepôt Siak Sri Indrapura for centuries, albeit from a marginal position.

It is one of Porath's concerns to demonstrate through his analysis of Sakai shamanic songs that for the Sakai the Siak Sultanate has played an important role as a formidable power – if not in everyday life, at least in their collective imagination. In this approach he distances himself from an earlier view of a radical opposition between Sumatran shamanism and the hegemonies of Islam and the State. Porath shows how shamanic songs are often introduced with Islamic formulae and the topics of the "images of the spirit dimension are modelled on the Malay kingdom and its discourses. Both these categorical Others (the spirit dimension, and the traditional kindom polity and society) are conceived of as being external sources of power" (190). Porath's approach to Sakai shamanism thus parallels Anna Tsing's famous analysis of Meratus shaman's equation of the power of spirits and the power of the Indonesian state in her "In the Realm of the Diamond Queen" (Princeton 1993). Within contemporary shamanic studies in general, Porath follows the lead of authors like Michael Taussig, Caroline Humphrey, and Nicolas Thomas who have historicised shamanism. In contrast to all these authors he complements his historical and sociological analysis with a detailed description of shamanic performances and with a close reading of shamanic songs.

Porath looks at Sakai shamanism as a performative practice that reflects the Sakai's assertion of autonomy through a manipulative involvement with the hegemonic powers of the Sultan, the foreign Chinese, Arab and Dutch traders, and with the means of their power: their



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transport technology, their military might, and their ideologies – above all Islam. He does so through the examination of two kinds of shamanic ritual: *Dikei*, healing sessions, and *kelongkap*, community rituals. He demonstrates how the Sakai had to negotiate their identity with the demands of an increasingly hegemonic and ideological Malayness, since the 19th century. This negotiation becomes apparent in concepts that at first sight appear to be "original" Sakai terms marking a difference to Muslim Malay ways, but which at close inspection turn out to be Islamic concepts. For instance, *dikei*, a Malay rendering of Arabic *zikr*, to recite the Qur'an, designates the shamanic healing practices of the Sakai. One of the Sakai's terms to denote the soul, *batin,* likewise recurs to Islamic mystical traditions, while the other important term for soul, *semangat*, is of old Malay stock. Porath interprets the use of these concepts as the subsuming of the Sakai's shamanic practices to the authoritative discourse of Islam (218). At the same time they may also be looked at as an interesting twist in the Sakai's masking their own *kafir*-practices vis-à-vis Malay visitors.

While in *dikei*, these adaptations to Islam remain on a purely linguistic level, in the *kelongkap* rituals they include performative elements. The *kelongkap* rituals are particularly fascinating because they involve several shamans performing together or one after the other in the context of a community ritual. The purpose of *kelongkap* is not medical healing, but the assertion of the "completeness" (Indon. *kelengkapan*) of the community (136). The *kelongkap* is an event that strengthens the Sakai's group identity by addressing and rectifying existing conflicts and by simply entertaining the crowd throughout a festive night. Some performative elements of the *kelongkap*, like the swirling and prostration of shamans, may reflect their Sufi origin and, thus, suggest that the community rituals have probably been the main stage of an early syncretistic merging of shamanism and Islam.

Porath adds as another example of a transformation of an Islamic concept the milk-kinship among the Sakai, with which he deals in the third chapter. According to Islamic family law, a boy and a girl who have been breast-fed by the same woman may not marry, even if they are not "blood siblings." In its literal meaning, milk-siblingship, thus, simply establishes an incest barrier analogous to that among "blood siblings." Like other matrilineal societies in the Islamic realm – i.e., the Tuareg – the Sakai appear to have reinterpreted the concept of milk-kinship to legitimise matrilineal reckoning of descent.

All this suggests that the Sakai must have been actively involved in the wider Malay discursive community throughout the century-long process of Islamisation, so that it seems a bit far-fetched to speak of a non-Islamic reality of the Sakai (215) that can still be separated from an Islamic reality. There are several statements in a similar vein, in Porath's book, which contradict the assertion in other places that Sakai shamanism has been deeply shaped by its interaction with the Malay Muslim world. This ambivalence is never really overcome and might be accountable to successive stages of reflection in the process of research.

One of the strengths of this ethnographically rich book is the rendering and interpretation of a great number of shamanic songs. Porath offers mostly genuine translations of this very difficult genre, which testify to his intimate familiarity with a whole universe of metaphors, tropes, and allusions that make up the language of the spells. The elliptic nature of this poetry, of course, leaves open alternative readings and, thus, invites criticism of the suggested translation. In certain passages, Porath's translations are indeed unconvincing. For instance, *Sikat jangan minyak gilo*, a line from the calling of the *mambak*-spirit, rendered by Porath as "Madly I comb my hair" (85) should more probably be read as "I comb my hair with maddening oil." In others, they are careless, as in this line of the song "Mad King Crocodile" on p. 167: *Di su'uh po'i di imbau datak*, translated as "I call you to arrive" instead of "If ordered he leaves, if called he comes." Or on the same page the confusion of upriver and downstream, which is repeated on pp. 112 and 114 and which is echoed by a confusion of left and right on p. 109. A number of lines in the song on p. 156 (beginning with *ku toluk puti' omeh* until *nan tubedo*) are rendered in a particularly confused and inconsistent way.

Considering the difficulty of translating any poetry well – and particularly such genres as the polysemic poetry of magic songs or the *pantun* quatrains with their subtle phonetic allusions – it would have been no loss of face for the author to admit to the rather tentative character of some of his translations or to offer alternative readings. But as it is, the obvious lack of solidity in some spots casts unnecessary doubts on the majority of convincing translations. And Porath's speculative interpretations of the weaker translations become a bit more doubtful, too – as, for instance, when he interprets a rendering of the song "Young King Driving His Sedan" as involving a car crash (207). This crash is simply not warranted by the transcript of the song. In other cases, though, Porath offers very convincing translations and interpretations, i.e., of the song "Lady Java" (175).

Another minor criticism concerns the editing. It is a pity that it has been done rather casually so that the reader has to suffer through countless printing errors. Names are misspelt (Antlov instead of Antlöv, Bourguinon instead of Bourguignon, Devereaux instead of Devereux, Dominig instead of Domenig, Hultzkrantz instead of Hultkrantz, Jaspers instead of Jaspan, Kepferer instead of Kapferer – and even the likes of van Gennep and Lévi-Strauss must do with van Gannap and with an e without the *accent aigu*, respectively). Throughout the text, one encounters reins for reigns, habbits for habits, Sriwajaya for Srivijaya, inheritence for inheritance, sedenterised for sedentarised, kayaks for canoes, alternative states of consciousness for altered states of consciousness, tenants of Islam for tenets of Islam – not to speak of Indonesian words: *terrasing* instead of



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*terasing, kemadjuan* for *kemajuan*, *terkebelakang* for *terbelakang*.

These editorial weaknesses notwithstanding, Porath's book is a highly welcome contribution to an increasing number of monographs about Indonesian societies that have escaped the close attention of colonial and early postcolonial ethnographers. And it is a committed effort to engage with the difficult genre of shamanic texts in a comprehensive way, which, despite the minor shortcomings mentioned above, is laudable in itself. But the originality and importance of Porath's book certainly lies in the ambition to combine a social anthropological approach to shamanism with a philological one.

One last remark concerns the choice of the topic itself. At a point in Sakai history, in which their survival as a culturally distinct group is doomed beyond hope, it may seem astonishing that Porath doesn't commit himself to the analysis of the processes that cause the present marginialisation and plight of the Sakai. Their bitter tragedy consists in the fact that the hegemonic worldly powers they used to invoke in shamanic songs – just as they invoke powerful spirits – in order to harness and manipulate them, have physically arrived, pushed them to the margins of the frontier society, and turned the expressive remnants of their way of life into a petty touristic attraction for the occasional Caltex employee. The big question that remains unanswered for me in Porath's book thus is: What does the experience of this utter powerlessness mean for the legitimacy of shamanic practice? Reading Porath's account, my impression is that it means surprisingly little. Shamanism is still a powerful therapy for those seeking health, and it is still a powerful source of group identity. Perhaps this is so because Sakai shamans have always been the underdogs in their confrontation with the mighty spirits like *mambak*, "Lord King Crocodile," "Young King Driving his Sedan" and their worldly counterparts. It was the shaman's daring and cunning in dealing with these powers that earned them a following that hoped to resist these powers with their guidance. Perhaps this also explains the optimism that pervades Porath's book, which seems at first a bit misplaced in the case of a society that is recklessly being deprived of its ecological base.

Heinzpeter Znoj

**Roberts, Richard:** Litigants and Households. African Disputes and Colonial Courts in the French Soudan, 1895–1912. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005. 309 pp. ISBN 0-3250-0258-4. Price: $ 29.95

This useful volume is based upon extensive archival research in Mali, West Africa, along with interviews of local Africans familiar with local courts and trials. It makes use of records for about 2,000 recorded cases from the era of early French colonialism in West Africa. This provides a valuable description of how the French colonialists sought to use native courts to impose order on local Africans and also, in contrast, how opportunistic Africans sought to use courts to claim new rights in changing economic and political situations, what the author describes as an ever-changing "landscape of power" (2).

In 1905 French colonialists established local African courts in what is now Mali and adjoining areas of Sudanic West Africa. These were divided into three levels: (1) Village tribunals headed by local chiefs and aimed at achieving reconciliation between local disputants; no records were kept by such bodies. (2) Provincial tribunals headed by African magistrates who were appointed by French officials who supervised them. (3) District tribunals which reviewed appeals from provincial tribunals and whose judgements were made by the French Lieutenant Governor. This volume is almost entirely concerned with cases heard by provincial tribunals. These kept written records and were the courts where local African ideas and practices of law directly encountered the authority of French administrators. These were the arenas where Africans could test their views about law and justice against those of their colonial rulers and where French administrators, in turn, could appraise and judge the ability and character of Africans against their own views of what constituted civilised behaviour. The French repeatedly cited court records as evidence of the character (and, at times, the backwardness) of African society and culture.

Those cases that reached provincial tribunals were never seen by Africans as ones meriting reconciliation. Reconciliation was a concept in large part synonymous with the local social pressures to conform which were experienced in local communities. Those who brought cases beyond their villages to provincial tribunals sought judgements that would assign rewards and punishments to the protagonists involved, not peaceful resolution. These were cases which litigants saw as insoluble locally because traditional social life had changed, because older social ties and values no longer fully held.

During the earlier decades of these courts local Malian society was disrupted by the end of legalized slavery. This led to many former African slaves now seeking to leave the households and even villages where they had been subordinated; this included men who had worked for African landholders and petty traders and artisans and also women seeking to leave men who had purchased them as concubines and wives. Former owners sought to hold on to former slaves by claiming that slaves owed them debts; former slaves often claimed former masters owed them wages or had not properly supported them in food and housing. The overwhelming number of cases involved women seeking to leave men who claimed to be their legal husbands. In short, the newly-created local colonial tribunals provided new arenas where those of lower status could try to challenge their superiors successfully. One of the major results of this growing litigation was that French colonialists began to reconsider their stereotypes about the nature of African households and the stability of African society.

At first, French colonialists supported women seeking divorce, criticizing ways in which traditional African society oppressed women. Later officials became ever



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